SCHOLARLY RESEARCH
PRINCIPLES AND METHODOLOGY

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Preface

Today, there is an acute need for scholarly and authentic research in accordance with the frame work of Islam. The ideology presented by Islam had faced challenges in the past when it was confronted with the deluge of Greek philosophy. However, at that time the foundations of Islamic society were quite strong. Muslims faced the challenge with mature insight, moral conviction and creative spirit. However, the present circumstances have intensified the challenges Muslims now face. Today, the forces of Islamic renaissance, facing challenges on each and every frontier, can obtain ideological nourishment only from the fountain of research.

This lecture was delivered by Maulana Syed Abul Ala Maududi at the inauguration of the research institution, Idarah Ma'ariful Islam, Karachi on the 22nd of September 1963. It is being published in the form of a booklet keeping in mind the importance, value and need for scholarly research as well as suitable practical planning required for its initiation.

In the name of Allah, most Gracious, most Merciful

All the knowledge and arts present in the world today may broadly be classified into two parts. One component is based exclusively on actual information which man procures in this world, in various phases of his life. The second part comprises of those concepts that each group of people and community develops, in tune with its particular ideology and perspective. For example, the sources of food available on earth are more or less the same everywhere. Except for those foods that are peculiar to some particular geographic area; by and large the same food sources are available to every person on earth. Despite this, we find that that each community has its own way of utilizing and cooking these primary foodstuffs as per their taste, preparing a wide range of dishes and delicacies. Quite similar is the case with knowledge and information. As far as the primary knowledge of entities is concerned, there is no important difference in the information about things observable in the world. The difference arises on the basis of how a

person of a particular outlook classifies and organizes the bits of information to formulate a distinct philosophy of life, ideology and mode of practice. This is how cultures keep evolving. Thus, every culture present on the face of the earth is essentially based on the same information that all of us have about the universe. However, each of these cultures adopted this information in its own way; employing its own point of view and formulated an ideological and practical system which came to be known as its unique culture. This is what gives rise to distinct and recognizable traits of each culture.

It should be clearly understood in this regard that if a community discards the activities of thinking and research or intellectual striving to gather and assimilate new knowledge then it resigns itself to stagnation. Stagnation leads to decline and decline eventually results in its domination by a foreign community. When another community dominates over it, such domination is never limited merely to the political and economic spheres, but most importantly, the domination is ideological in nature, its culture dominating over the culture of the vanquished community. The next step is that the conquered community starts imitating the dominant one. The original research is done by

others, it is organized by others, arranged by others to formulate a philosophy of life, providing an ideological and practical system, and all that the overwhelmed community does is to simply ape them and accept whatever they offer. The more this practice develops and reaches its peak, the more this defeated community loses its individuality and it often so happens that it even decays to extinction. Such communities have indeed disappeared from this world whose culture is relegated to the pages of history with no trace of it observable now.

When the Islamic movement rose in this world, it did not merely gain political or military victory over subdued communities, but the fact remains that the Muslims of that era were foremost in the field of research as well. They not only strived to gain as much information as possible, but reorganized this data as per their own perspective, ideology and beliefs. Accordingly, a culture so vibrant and robust arose as a result of their efforts that it influenced the world with its indelible mark.

Is it not the case that Muslims have even compiled the science of medicine in such a manner that those books of medicine give an impression of them being compiled by a

community having a definite ideology? Beginning with the praise and gratitude of God, the writers of these books were careful not to prescribe medicines containing prohibited ingredients. They selected only the permitted components; interspersing their treatise with remarks suggesting "This is a miracle manifested by Allah's power. The strength of these medicines is not inherent, but obtained from Allah's decree" and "Cure lies in the hands of Allah, and the success of these medicines is totally dependent on Allah's will." They recited 'Bismillah' (i.e. "in the name of Allah") before examining the patient and sought Allah's guidance. What does all this indicate? Essentially it was the same science and information that any doctor would provide, but they chose to mould it according to their own ideology, based on belief in God.

I have presented the example of medicine because a person may quip, 'What does any ideology have to do with medicine?' But you would appreciate the fact that bearers of a particular ideology and school of thought would cast each and every idea in their own frame of reference and it is *their* idea that eventually triumphs.

As a result of this intellectual work by Muslims, it so happened that for ages the world came to recognize Muslim culture as authentic. Muslim society was regarded as a model. Non-Muslims used to harbour grudges and enmity against Muslims, but still followed them in their ways. Muslims had uprooted polytheism from the face of the earth and were successful in spreading monotheism with such vigour- erecting a sound ideological system on its foundations- that the polytheists could no longer stand in defence of polytheism. These were the same polytheists who would once boldly claim "Has he made several gods [only] one God? Indeed, this is a curious thing." (Quran, Surah 38, Ayat 5) Gone were the days when they used to assume polytheism to be the truth and monotheism to be a strange doctrine. Soon a time came when the polytheists found it difficult to claim the existence of more than one god. They began articulating their beliefs in such a way that 'Although we know that there is only one God, all these various (polytheistic) ways that we practice are merely means to ascend towards Him and find favour with that one God'. Monotheistic sects began to appear and flourish among various polytheistic communities. We have had several such examples in our own country as well. Thus, the

philosophy, science and sociology, Muslims had compiled began to dominate the world. The renaissance movement that began in the Western world owes its rise to the knowledge passed on to Europe by Muslims. The torchbearers of this movement were the same people who benefitted from Muslim Spain's arts and sciences and were a product of Muslims' schools and colleges. There was a time when European scholars prided themselves on being able to speak and write Arabic. Many a person from their priestly class inscribed their private letters in Arabic. The grievances of people belonging to that era can still be found in their parchments wherein they have lamented upon the dominant influence of the Arabic language on their scholars, to the extent that they used it even in their private lives while abandoning their own language. All this was a result of the fact that at that time scholarly research was undertaken by Muslims while the other communities used to ape them, acquire and learn the knowledge compiled by them, in the very form compiled by them. This led to their minds being moulded by Islamic thoughts. One may refer to the books of Western Christian orators of that time- they are a literal reproduction of the works and rhetoric style of Muslim orators; the same issues, the same

terminology, the same arguments except for the introduction of Christian dogma in some of their works. But for the creed of trinity, one would fail to spot any differences between the writings of Christian and Muslim scholars.

This was followed by another era in which Muslims just about abandoned research efforts. They were content at merely studying and teaching the knowledge available from past researchers, sometimes augmenting it with their own comments. Footnote upon footnote was written by them on ancient treatises, but the pursuit of new research into arts and sciences was forsaken. At the same time, the West shouldered this task of innovative research and started with scholarly studies. They began to gather new data and organize it thus producing a new philosophy and ideological system on its basis. While the Muslims began to gradually sink into stagnation, this new found knowledge explosion began to augment the strength of the West with every passing day. It is but obvious that when they made new discoveries and did research, they obtained new tools and resources; their minds got a new whiff of life and were awakened. At the same time, Muslims abandoned research efforts and naturally slipped into stagnation. This stagnation came about in two to three hundred

years. One may realize by turning the pages of history that by the 18th century, the gap between Muslims and the West became so prominent that the Muslims began to surrender to the ever increasing domination of Western powers. The invasions and victories of the Western powers from 18th century onward stand witness to the huge losses that Muslims incurred by forsaking scholarly research and adopting stagnation. On the other hand the profits of innovation were responsible for the rise of the West.

As I have already explained; stagnation leads to decline and decline eventually results in the domination of a group by a foreign community. But if scholarly research is undertaken on a sustained and regular basis and new discoveries are made, new philosophies of life are formulated; it essentially leads to renewed social momentum and the intellectually active community gains dominance. After dominance is achieved, the progress does not stop at a plateau; rather, the community that gains dominance, engages in further research, develops useful skills and creates knowledge, analyses the available information and organizes it to shape a vibrant culture. It does not attain victory only with its political power, weapons and military might; rather the entire culture of the dominated

community starts getting shaped by it. We have seen this sequence of events earlier in history, just as we are witnessing it today.

During the era of dominance of Islam, the entire world could appreciate that culture in the real sense belongs to the Muslims. A model society exists only among Muslims. Ideology and knowledge find their sublime expression in Muslim thought. Quite contrary to this, we have now reached a stage where even Muslims are convinced that 'If there's a culture worth following, it's Western culture; if there's a society to be regarded as the developed one, it's Western society; all the arts and sciences belong to the West... our role is simply to imitate them and toe their line'. This is the situation prevalent today; whether we choose to deny it or even try to condemn it in our speeches. We may try to absolve ourselves with our hollow claims but just observe what is happening in practice. In real life, the ideologies, philosophies, lifestyle and culture of the West are influencing us. The point I wish to drive across is that if we want to preserve our way of life, there is no option for us except to start scholarly research all over again.

In this regard, it is worth elucidating upon the kind of scholarly research we need to pursue.

There is a kind of research that Western researchers would have us adopt. That is a purposeless activity; it amounts to "research-for-the-sake-of-research", e.g. editing available books, cross checking their various copies and delving upon the differences therein, compiling the birth and death anniversaries of authors and the like. This kind of research, beyond a doubt, does contribute, to some extent, to our knowledge and arts. But this is not the kind of research that stirs up life in a community; this is a cold and lifeless research. The West itself engages in another kind of research- the one that builds up social momentum. Its purpose is to provide them with the power and skills required to dominate the world.

One more kind of research is gaining ground in our country. This research is ostensibly on Islam itself, but directed towards producing a new version of Islam which would be compliant with all the ideologies and values of the West. This effort aims to grant sanction to whatever the West permits, to prove as prohibited whatever the West considers prohibited and to mould Islam in a way that it appears to be just another edition of Western culture and society. Even this kind of research is of no use to us.

The research we recommend and the purpose of investigation we suggest is that arts and sciences be explored in the light of Islam. Based on such research, the ideological and practical system of Islam should be systematically organized. We envision certain objectives in this regard, and it is to attain these very objectives that we would like to engage in research.

1. The first thing we would like to do is to break the talisman of Western thought and philosophy. We wish to prove by means of reasonable and just examination that the facts present in Western sciences are nothing but common knowledge shared by the entire world. There is no cultural bias present in the facts themselves. However, the philosophy of life that the West has come up with, gathering these facts and truths, is utterly misplaced. The ideology and understanding of the universe and that of human beings established by the West is based on faulty notions. Hence the edifice of culture they have constructed on its foundations - from top to bottom, is absolutely false. The social sciences they have developed and the philosophies they have presented are roots of corruption and chaos. They do not lead to prosperity of

the individual, but his destruction and ultimately the destruction of their own civilization. This is the first important task, by which we expect that the magical spell of Western thought and philosophy would be broken that has bewitched Muslims. Without this, it is impossible to liberate Muslims from ideological slavery and inferiority complex. If they retain their inferiority complex you cannot expect them to switch from the position of follower to that of leader. Till then, their fate would be to blindly follow the West. You cannot change this situation until and unless you break this spell and make it amply clear that knowledge of facts is distinct from particular ways of organizing knowledge (to formulate a philosophy of life). The knowledge of facts may be correct in itself; still the philosophy of life arrived at by incorporating faulty notions may be an incorrect philosophy.

2. In addition to this, the second task at hand is to reorganize the available sciences and arts from an Islamic perspective, employing new methodologies and parameters, so that we can lay the foundations of an Islamic culture over

> them. In the same way, we are in need of an Islamic philosophy that may satisfy the human quest for the truth. This quest may be satiated only with the ideology that Islam has given us. It is in the nature of man to search for truth and strive to attain it; he can't live without it. Of the various paths that are employed to seek the truth, the path we consider authentic is the one shown by the Prophets (peace be upon them). Our motive lies in the search for truth- the reality of the universe and of human life itself. We seek to compile answers to these basic questions in the form of a coherent philosophy. This would lead to development of man accordingly. It is obvious that all this is not possible unless we formulate a philosophy as per the Islamic perspective. Without this it is inconceivable that psychology and other social sciences taught in our colleges and universities may ever be revised.

We have observed that establishment of a culture quite different from Western culture was attempted in Russia. When Russians adopted communist ideology, they could no longer accept the ideas of bourgeois philosophy being taught at their colleges and universities. For communists it

was imperative and crucial for their existence to formulate a communist philosophy and teach it to their future generations. This was so because unless they discarded the bourgeois philosophy and replaced it with communist philosophy, they could not present their ideology nor could they establish a communist state. On similar lines, it is important for us to formulate an Islamic philosophy and systematize all social sciences anew. For sure, actual facts and truths would remain unaltered- which form the common knowledge asset of the entire world. But to establish a complete system of thought and action on these facts and truths- whether it be the science of economics or that of law- just about every social science needs to be systematically restructured as per the Islamic perspective. Until this happens and such a revised syllabus is taught in our colleges and universities, one cannot entertain hopes of the rise of an Islamic culture here; rather, its mere existence would be difficult.

You might as well teach your children at home that God is One and that Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is His Messenger or even instil in their minds the percept that the Qur'an is the Word of God. (It is another matter that many

people have abandoned this duty as well and have surrendered their children to missionaries so that they may be allowed a free hand to inject any ideology in their minds.) Although some people do inculcate these articles of faith in their children's minds as a precaution, but when these children attend college they do not find 'God' anywhere in the sciences that they learn, nor do they see the role of God in the functioning of the universe. It is never taught to them that the Prophets have also provided us with a financial system, that the Messengers have also laid down a concept of law.... On the contrary, each and every science that they study instils in their minds the notion that Islam has – God forbid- committed many an error. For instance, it has (God forbid) done a pointless job in prohibiting interest, thus giving us an impractical system that no economy can run on or any financial system may stand upon. They come across the view that the Islamic punishment of chopping off the hand of the thief is a cruel act. Moreover, Islam has stipulated undue harsh punishments like flogging for acts as pleasurable and enjoyable as adultery and fornication!

Just ponder over this situation for a minute. Can it really be expected of such people that they would wholeheartedly accept and follow Islamic

culture while they are being bombarded with such an ideology? And then it is these same people who, after graduating from colleges and universities, govern your country, grace its secretariat, become its generals and fill its bureaucracy. How on earth can they then be convinced of the fact that Islam is worth practicing? Try engaging with the majority of highly qualified people; you would at once realize that they consider Islam outdated. This is because the way in which they have been taught the sciences precludes them from accepting the idea that there can ever be a practical lifestyle or system better than the one promulgated by the West. They feel that if there is a system worth emulating it is that of the West, because it is running (and quite successfully at that), while the other system (i.e. Islam) has been discarded by history and has had no influence on the sciences they have been studying.

Thus, along with providing a critical review, the other constructive task that is indispensible and is very much required today- is that all the sciences be formulated according to the Islamic perspective so that our young generation is entirely convinced of the genuineness of Islam. They must know that Islam is worth adopting and should indeed be practiced.

3. After this, the third task we are faced with is that a syllabus be formulated that produces books relevant to Islamic ideology. As of now, every person from top to bottom avers that we want to propagate Islamic teachings in Muslim countries. However, there has been no attempt till date to produce books on subjects taught in our universities from the Islamic perspective. I have told you a while back that the communists were not at all ready to teach those books of economics that were authored by bourgeois economists. They were not even ready to teach the philosophy of law that had been postulated by capitalist law experts. Accordingly, not only were they not willing to teach social sciences written by bourgeois authors, they were in fact producing their own Soviet Science. The matter is not just limited to sociology, but they had gone beyond that and were even calling their science 'Soviet science'. They had rewritten all scientific books in a way that they conformed to 'their' ideology, for they were not at all ready to nourish the future generations of communists on the scientific material handed out by capitalists.

The critical issue here is that 'Islamic teachings' is understood by many of our educators as introduction of a single class period to teach children about Islam (among all other periods wherein children are being taught those sciences that have been formulated by Western ideologues). This particular slot is dedicated to tell the class that there also exists an entity called 'God' whom you should know. Also there was a person whom God had appointed as His Messenger. But students do not notice any practical application or presence of this 'God' and His 'Messenger' in other lessons that they are being taught (in other subjects of study). On the contrary, all the sciences and arts taught to them are on the very same lines as those formulated by the West. Teachers refer to books of those authors who have become habituated of aping the West. This being the case, you should never harbour dreams of these institutions ever producing a Muslim generation that would strive to bring about an Islamic renaissance on this land. Actually renaissance is too distant a dream. Such a generation may not even be expected to let Islam persist in their lives. This kind of education leads to an abolition of our identity, which is getting obliterated every passing day. So called Muslim governments and influential groups

vested with authority- whether from bureaucracy or industry are bent upon convincing the West that there is no distinction among the two of us. Your culture is the same as our culture. Your lifestyle is also our lifestyle. Your ethics have been adopted by us completely and your values are our values. Moreover, we have also prohibited (declared as *haraam*) whatever you regard as prohibited. Similarly we permit whatever you permit (*halaal*). Indeed we were at fault in the past when we designated permitted things as prohibited. In such a scenario do you even expect Islam to persist here? Needless to say that it is quite improbable that a generation raised up on such an ideological grooming would ever strive to revive Islam here or would become flag bearers of an Islamic culture.

Another issue haunting us today is that the vast majority of our country has no access to Islamic literature because of the language barrier. It is a matter of concern that the literature and works of science and art available to us in Hindi are written by non-Muslims. Such authors often hold a deep grudge against Muslims. They try to show that actions of Muslims in the past were not at par with human culture and civilization. They have painted Muslims as rogues and criminals. According to them, Muslims have neither been

patriotic nor have they been of any service to mankind. They did not contribute to the struggle for independence. All sacrifices for independence were offered by Hindus alone. People harbouring such views have written history books and the Muslim youth are reading them. They have penned novels which are being read by Muslims as works of literature. However, not much of literature on Islam can be found in the Hindi language. It is quite obvious that this is an alarming situation for us. How can you expect an Islamic renaissance here when half of our country- especially that half that is in the majority- remains relegated to this state?

Hence, we desire that whatever is compiled in our research institutions should not only be limited to Urdu and Hindi but should also be available in English and Arabic. This means that the task of translation should also proceed simultaneously so as to bring out these works in English and Arabic as well. Arabic translations are important because the entire stretch of Muslims from the Tigris to the Atlantic speaks Arabic. Right now, they have seventeen independent states. It is evident that this population is a huge asset and the heart of the Islamic world. As long as Muslims remain attached to the Qur'an they would certainly be conscious of the importance of

the Qur'anic language, i.e. Arabic. What could then be more hazardous than this language becoming a vehicle of disbelief, vice and corruption, deviation and blasphemy? Besides, what is more unfortunate is that the influence of Western culture and lifestyle on Arab countries is even greater than what it is on us. We had succumbed to the West much earlier than them, but not to the extent that they have been influenced by it, despite their subjugation later. Almost all the government officials of Arab countries have a Western bend of mind and there's hardly any work going on there that conforms to Islamic principles. That does not mean that there's absolutely no effort being carried out there, but it is not adequate. It is our desire that scholarly works from Arabic be translated into Urdu and Hindi so that people here may benefit from their research. Similarly, whatever we produce here should be translated into Arabic so that we can generate a common knowledge pool. This will allow authentic Islamic ideology to be propagated in Muslim countries. Then their authorities may become convinced of the fact that Islam indeed provides a practical and feasible model. It would motivate them to implement Islam and provide guidelines as to how it can be practically implemented.

Not only us, but they too should be working towards this end.

English translation of research work is required for a number of reasons. You must realize its importance. First and foremost, the cream of our society is not ready to read any language other than English. Indeed many among them do not know any other language. There are some among our high society that find it difficult to write even their own names in Urdu! Some time back, a very prominent person of our country desired that his engineer son be provided with some acquaintance with Islam. Accordingly, a tutor was appointed to teach him about Islam. It came to be known that the student could not be taught in Urdu since he could not read anything in Urdu. This compelled the tutor to teach him in English despite the fact that Mr. Engineer and his entire family were born in this Muslim country. Yet, he was not acquainted with the language of this country to receive his lessons in Urdu. After that, attempts were made that he should at least be able to read the text of the Holy Qur'an. It took him a month to recite *Bismillah arRahman ar Raheem* and Surah alFatihah. For quite a few days the poor boy kept wondering why the Arabic script was written in reverse, i.e. from right to left. He had spent his entire life reading and

writing from left to right. This class of people is present in our country and it is this very class that is running our country! The reins of the country are in its hands. Now who will take the trouble to first teach them Urdu before teaching them about Islam? Hence, it is imperative that we provide them with material in the language they understand, so that at least their faith can be salvaged.

Apart from this, if you wish to propagate Islam in foreign countries, English is the only medium available to us. While English is not the sole lingua franca in this world, (there being other languages as well in which material on Islam needs to be provided) but we, on our part, do not have the means and resources to publish books in other languages. Also, once the true Islamic teachings in their pristine form are made available in English, it is quite probable that further translations in other Western languages would naturally follow. For instance, one of our books has been translated into English; now from that translation, it has been further translated into German, Japanese and French. Thus, the task of propagating the message of Islam in other languages has been taken up by some other sincere servants of God. Our duty should be to provide correct information on Islam in English.

This method of communicating the message of Islam all over the world is effective and it needs to be fully harnessed.

In our view, there are two more tasks that need attention. Though they are less important but they are nonetheless required.

1. The youth of the Muslim community spread across the world is facing the threat of apostasy, especially in West Indies and other far-off islands. Even in USA, Canada and South Africa, the Muslim population is in a minority, while the disbelievers are in power as well as in majority. Their educational system is entirely un-Islamic with no separate facility to educate Muslims. The new generation of Muslims is gradually getting absorbed into the non-Muslim majority. All they know about Islam is that they are children of Muslims and hence Muslims themselves. We wish to design a short Islamic syllabus for them so that at least the young generation there can remain Muslim and they can be provided with important Islamic guidelines.
2. Also, those foreigners who have embraced Islam thanks to the propagation of Islam in their countries should be provided with

important information regarding Islam. If neglected, there is no way these newly reverted Muslims would be able to lead their lives as Muslims.

To meet these requirements, a concise syllabus needs to be prepared that would contain basic information on Islamic injunctions so as to allow newly reverting individuals to lead their lives as per Islamic teachings. They should know about ritual purity and impurity and the difference between the two. They should learn how to achieve the state of purity? How to offer *Salat* (*namaz*)? What are the rules of fasting? What are the regulations governing *Zakaat*? Moreover, they should be made competent enough to preach Islam to others. For this purpose, we need to provide them with suitable material that would help them in understanding Islam correctly and propagating it among others. We plan to meet this requirement as well. Apart from English, this material should be available in other languages like Swahili which is the dominant language of Africa. This would help in dissemination of the message of Islam in Africa as well. As and when feasible, we would provide material in many more languages *Insha Allah*.

This is a brief outline of the work under our consideration. I have tried to describe the purpose, need and importance of this work in some detail.

I would like each of you to empathize with this task. Now it is for each person among you to decide how he can contribute to this cause. We welcome everyone who is ready to contribute with his intellectual resources. This responsibility is not the sole domain of any particular group. The doors of this research institution are open to every person who believes in Islam and would like to support the effort by employing his intellectual resources and knowledge. This is our sincere appeal. We would be grateful to each and everyone who would collaborate with us. We pray to God to reward them abundantly.

Those people who would support us with material resources would also be rewarded by God. We have no vested interest in the task we plan to pursue. We serve the same religion of Allah that every Muslim follows. It is incumbent upon every believer to support us in whatever way he can. He should not leave any stone unturned to achieve this objective. The least anyone can do is to encourage us with kind words. In fact, even if a person refrains from

harbouring ill feelings towards us or abstains from spreading false propaganda against us, we would count that attitude as a favour, which would be rewarded by Allah.